

*June 26, 2009*

**Mr. SCOTT of Virginia:** Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate an institution in Richmond, the capital of the Commonwealth of Virginia. On Saturday, June 27, 2009, the members of Fourth Baptist Church are celebrating their 150th anniversary, and I would like to take a moment to highlight the rich history of this church and its contribution to our community.

Fourth Baptist Church, the first black Baptist church in the Church Hill community in Richmond, began in 1859 as a regular assembly of slaves for prayer. The group met regularly on Chimborazo Hill until the outbreak of the Civil War, when the white congregation of the Leigh Street Baptist Church granted permission for the slaves to hold their services in the church basement.

In 1865 the Reverend Scott Gwathmey, one of the group's prayer leaders, gained permission for the group to meet in a Union barracks on Chimborazo Hill. There, on December 2, 1865, the Fourth Baptist Church was formally organized, with Reverend Gwathmey serving as the first pastor.

The barracks were eventually demolished, but the congregation salvaged lumber from the debris and constructed their own church building. In 1875 this church was replaced by another one of frame, on the northern side of Church Hill, near what was to be the site of the present church. The present building was completed in 1884, three months after the former church was destroyed by fire.

The church has grown considerably from these humble beginnings. Major expansion was conducted under the direction of current Pastor Emeritus, Dr. Robert L. Taylor. Dr. Taylor served as Pastor of Fourth Baptist for 34 years. He was responsible for instituting many of the programs that still exist at the church, and oversaw the building of the addition to the church building now known as Taylor Hall.

Fourth Baptist has vibrant Men's and Women's programs that enlighten and assist the young people as they participate in the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and the Youth Usher programs. Fourth Baptist also participates with the Baptist General Convention of Virginia to conduct outreach ministries throughout Greater Richmond and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

I would like to congratulate Chairman of the Board of Deacons Gerard A. Dabney, Interim Pastor Dr. Marion Tapscott, and the entire congregation of Fourth Street Baptist on the occasion of their 150th anniversary. I wish them another 150 years of service to their community.